

Hasselgren profile

Ragnar Hasselgren (1904-1982) was a Swedish-born singer, who performed in the Bay Area from the 1920s through the 1970s. Born in Sweden in 1904, Hasselgren immigrated to the United States in 1906 with his parents and sisters. The family settled on a farm in Montana, where he learned to play multiple instruments and sing the Swedish songs that would be part of his lifelong repertoire. On Saturday evenings the family would play for dances in their home or at a neighbor's place.

Ragnar Hasselgren moved to San Francisco in 1922 and lived in the area — off and on — for the rest of his life. In the 1930s he worked as a guard at Folsom Prison. During World War II he served in the U. S. Navy's Pacific Fleet. After the war he returned briefly to Montana for an unsuccessful attempt at ranching. Other employment included working in San Francisco as a carpenter for Victor Holmgren's construction company and being supervisor of maintenance for a school district in Pacifica. His two marriages ended in divorce.

When Hasselgren first arrived in San Francisco, he participated in a number of amateur theatrical productions. As a young man he was active in several Swedish organizations. Over the years he was much in demand as a performer for local social clubs, benefits and other functions. In the 1940s and 1950s he recorded about twenty songs for the Harmony and Gaare labels.

In 1971 Ragnar Hasselgren returned to the land of his birth and was moved to tears by a visit to Lake Siljan in Dalarna. His signature song had long been "Vid Siljan Är Mitt Hem" (Lake Siljan Is My Home). In the early 1970s Hasselgren suffered a stroke, which left him partially paralyzed and with difficulty walking. His ability to sing was unaffected, however, and he continued to perform.

SOURCES

The above profile was based on articles, which appeared in *Vestkusten* (The West Coast), a Swedish-American weekly published in San Francisco. This newspaper may be read online at the California Digital Newspaper Collection and at the Minnesota Historical Society's Swedish American Newspapers Archive.

Hasselgren names and dates

BORN: June 3, 1904

DIED: September 28, 1982

BIRTHPLACE: Strömshyttan, Dalarna

PARENTS

Fred Hasselgren

Amanda Hasselgren (1863 – 1954)

SISTERS

Theresa Swanson (1887 – 1969)

Hildur Pritzkow (1902 – 1955)

WIVES

Valborg Hallquist, m. 1928

Anna Nyberg, m. 1948

EMPLOYMENT

Victor Holmgren Construction: carpenter

Folsom Prison: guard

Federal building

US Navy

Montana: rancher

Westlake Development (Daly City): construction and maintenance man

Pacifica Elementary School District: maintenance supervisor

MEMBERSHIPS

IOGT - Good Templars

Masons

Rotary Club

St. Andrew Presbyterian Church (Pacifica)

Vasa Order